

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 02006 110948Z

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-07 TRSE-00 OMB-01 IO-13 AID-05

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2606

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CINCPAC

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, PFOR, MARR, KS, US

SUBJECT: KOREAN PRESS REACTION TO FONMIN PAK'S MEETINGS IN
WASHINGTON

SUMMARY: PRESS AND INITIAL PRIVATE REACTION TO REPORTS ON
PAK'S MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON IS WORRIED. END SUMMARY.

1. ON MARCH 10 AND 11, KOREAN VERNACULAR PRESS GAVE HEADLINE
COVERAGE TO FONMIN PAK TONG JON'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT
CARTER IN WASHINGTON MARCH 10. HEADLINES EMPHASIZED U.S.
SUPPORT FOR STRENGTHENING OF KOREAN MILITARY AND CARTER'S
RE-AFFIRMATION OF SECURITY COMMITMENT. TOP STORIES GAVE
FULL DETAILS OF MEETINGS, EMPHASIZING CONDITIONS WHICH CARTER
ATTACHED TO WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS AND MINISTER PAK'S
RESPONSE ON HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN KOREA. AFTERNOON
PAPERS MARCH 11 NOTED OPPOSITION NDP'S RESOLUTION PRO-
TESTING TROOP WITHDRAWAL. (SEPTTEL).

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PAGE 02 SEOUL 02006 110948Z

2. INSIDE FEATURE ARTICLES ANALYZED MEETING AS PUBLIC
ANNOUNCEMENT OF CARTER POLICIES TOWARD KOREA WHICH HAD BEEN
SOME TIME IN PREPARATION. PAPERS ALL RAN TRANSLATIONS OF
CARTER'S REMARKS AT EARLIER PRESS CONFERENCE, EXPLAINING
WHERE NECESSARY EARLY CONFUSION OVER WHETHER STATEMENT
INDICATED U.S. GROUND FORCES MIGHT BE PLACED UNDER KOREAN
COMMAND. ONE ARTICLE IN CHOSON ILBO STRUCK UNUSUAL NOTE

WITH OBSERVATION THAT CARTER HAD RECONFIRMED TO RPK U.S.'S
"FUNDAMENTAL POSITION OF NOT GETTING INVOLVED IN ANY
GROUND ENGAGEMENT" IN KOREA, ALTHOUGH SUPPORT WOULD BE
FAITHFULLY FURNISHED.

3. EDITORIALS, APPEARING IN ALL PAPERS, VOICED WORRIED TONE.
MOST COMMON WORRY WAS THAT WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. GROUND FORCES
MIGHT BE MIS-READ IN P'YONGYANG AS FIRST STAGE OF TOTAL
U.S. WITHDRAWAL, ENDANGERING PEACE IN ALL OF NORTHEAST ASIA,
AS WELL AS IN KOREAN PENINSULA. SEVERAL
PAPERS NOTED THAT ANNOUNCEMENT OF TROOP REDUCTION HAS
CAUSED A FEELING OF "UNEASE" AMONG KOREANS. HAN'GUK ILBO
EMPHASIZED NEED FOR ADEQUATE RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION OF
PRE-CONDITIONS FOR DRAWING UP A SCHEDULE FOR WITHDRAWAL."
CHOSON ILBO, WHILE NOTING KOREA'S POSITION WAS "TOO SEVERE
TO BE CALLED 'OPTIMISTIC,'" CONCLUDED "OUR MAJOR DUTY IS
TO RESPOND TO THERSE CIRCUMSTANCES REALISTICALLY."

4. DESPITE CARTER'S ASSURANCES TO CONTRARY, SEVERAL PAPERS
EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT ELIMINATION OF RESTRICTION ON
AMERICANS'S TRAVEL TO NORTH KOREA MIGHT BE PRELUDE TO
RELAXATION OF BAN ON TRADE WITH NORTH. HAN'GUK ILBO ALSO
REFERRED TO PRESENCE OF U.S. KOREAN ECONOMIC ISSUES.

5. PRIVATE REACTION TO DATE SAME AS ABOVE EXCEPT THAT
SOME REMARKS CARRY A MORE ACCUSATORY TONE THAN WE HAVE
YET SEEN IN PRINT.

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
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Status: NATIVE
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TAGS: SOPN, PFOR, MARR, KS, US, (PARK TONG-CHIN)
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